

She is broad as a ghetto, long as the mass graves & high
as Hiroshima; she is wide as the swath of
Crusaders, round as the trade routes of slavers
& tall as the towers of armed guards.

She is bright as the flesh of heretics, brilliant as the
flash of Alamogordo glowing as the hootches of
Indo-China.

She is heavy as the decapitated children of infidels,
dismembered witches, cruciform kikes, hanging
gypsies, lynched niggers, razored spicks, gunshot
greasers, vaporized japs & smithereened chinks.

Her engines are powered by the critical mass of history;
she runs on pure truth; fuel is everywhere; she
is frictionless as a mission to the moon

yet her builders do not survive her demands; she echoes
their dedication with inhuman portent; she
trembles with hunger, with destiny greater than
her birth; she has a life of her own that feeds
on them.

They wonder who will lift that first hand to her levers;
when that day comes & they stand at her controls,
will they smile at one another, thumbs up?

They wonder, when that day is over, will there be anyone,
after a night's rest, to tear her to pieces? A
few to let her rot & go about their business?

Will ten form a committee & tack a plaque on her side in
commemoration? Will fifty assemble to clean her?
Five hundred oil her dismantled sections? One
thousand & fifty pack them carefully in numbered
crates, schematics for her reconstruction kept
for future reference?

Will nations be reborn rebuilding, millions watching,
billions remembering, quintillions without a
single regret?

I MAKE MY BED

At 3:06 this morning my house, a quarter mile
from the Hayward Fault, shook me awake. A mild shock;
happens all the time; the Pacific shelves
readjusting themselves; sections of the planet shifting.

Not to worry, except that now my morning coffee
spills, my typewriter works its way to the northwest,
downhill with every key struck; no matter
how I put the pencil down, it rolls. I find myself

leaning in my art each day, striving for new levels,
the muscles in my mind, the spine of my feelings
subtly straining to adjust, compensate, stay straight.

I could move to Idaho, spend the rest of my life
in an airship & still have nothing in writing. At least
the house settles as best it can, no fault of its own
it was built a short stroll from continental slippage.

I can always turn my desk around, let things go
southeast for a while to relieve the strain, balance
things out.
I can pour less coffee in my cup, bolt the typewriter
down,
buy hexagonal pencils.

WAR MOVIE

Pinned down by enemy fire, she lies sunwise
on bikini sand, her brave belly coppertoned
with dud napalm, the firelight so fierce the polaroids
prevent her luscious lids from parting so we can see her
grimace gleaming in the cordite breeze.

Down by the water little brother leads
a platoon & a charmed life at the same time,
handling the BAR, uttering, with deadly accuracy,
explosions in his cheeks as the frisbee 88's
reign around him like a halo
flaring his position with a ring of dead buddies.

What a rotten war! She feels a chill, goosebumps,
fires from the hip clean through the heart
of an armed young man standing in her sun. Infiltrator,
hardly more than a boy, in a stolen uniform,
looking like us, talking like us, sneaking behind
our lines.

The acrid sky darkens. Frogmen are flopping
out of the sea with demolition thighs inconsiderately
sprinkling. Little brother glistens to tunes of glory
with a bayonet in his teeth, a curl bouncing
under his rakish helmet. The grey tonnage is set
to go. Already droplets pock the beach, tiny calibre.

Bodies will soon be dark. Materiel will steam.
Cameramen frown skyward for incoming mail.
The director hollers at the troops between full hands.
With sand on their feet the dead rise up screaming war
cries
& thunder into the water one last time before cut & wrap.